ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

000cessible on account of snow during the winter months.

778 Much festivity pervades in this part of the country in the summer months, for tradition has it that on the summit of Tomori is the grave of Iman Abbas Ali to which many natives make pilgrimages every August from 346 the 19th to 28th. For this purpose, a monastery has been built 1,900 feet below the summit by the Bektashi Dervishes, where the pilgrims and visitors may lodge in comfort before the strenuous climb to the topmost 776 point; and it is another native belief that that top is the seat of the ancient sky-god, related to the Zeus of Dodona and Homer's Olympia, and only certain, privileged mortals may reach his abode, others being warned away by 773 nose bleedings and sickness. Also, there is said to be an inaccessible tree bearing golden apples growing on the summit. The peasants 778 often take oath by "Father Tomori," which mountain they regard with superstitious awe. Tourists to Albania often hear this mountain referred to as "The Olympia of Albania."

771 It is the district of Shpat at the base of 551 Mount Bokanik just to the east of this richly historical center that was in constant dispute

AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO ALBANIA

It is also to be noted, with interest to the archaeologist, that there have been many traces found in the neighborhood of ancient Roman baths, but the secret of their architecture has been lost during the Turkish occupation, if not before.

Further into the north and central part of the country is to be found the old Monastery of St. John Vladimir, the most important Orthodox monastery in Albania. Here abounds the richest folklore and tradition of the natives of Central Albania. St. John Vladimir is quite unknown to the rest of the Orthodox world, but great faith is placed in him by thousands of the people in that part of the country. History has it that John Vladimir was a Serbian prince, murdered in 1016 on the Island of Presba in Macedonia, by his brother-in-law, John Vladislav, the last of the mediaeval Bulgar Tsars of Ochrida. His body, buried in the Church of Our Lady at his birth place, soon became the object of a pious religious cult; and due to the gentleness of his personality, the horrible method of his death, and the strange lights said to be seen on his grave, the followers of his day proclaimed him a saint, and his last resting place became renowned for its miraculous powers.

3: Redlich S-3 (no date) 1936 EG1 AlbaniaEG1

leries and the long proportions of the buildings, and the rich-hued tiles of the roof combined to make a unique harmony of color design. However, these cells have been uninhabited for some time, as the Orthodox monks have almost died out in Albania, and the monastery is now under the jurisdiction of a priest; but in due respect to their former occupants the wives of the priests do not go beyond the threshold of this old monument sacred to the memory of the devout ones who dwelt therein. To-day most of the cells are tenanted by the servants and aged dependents of the monastery, also, a modern comfortable guest-house is maintained for the use of visitors.

The remains of the saint are placed in the chapel, where the faithful peasants, on the days of pilgrimage and exposition in early September, make wild efforts to get close enough to place a handkerchief or scarf on the coffin and to preserve these in case of illness, at which time, if worn, are believed to possess healing powers, especially against malaria and other fevers.

Returning to the highroad one soon arrives at Bradshesh, where the peculiarity in the

Alessio

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ANOTHER city wealthy with memories of the past is Alessio (Lesh), the ancient Lissos, situated southward from Scutari on the left bank of the Drin River. This city still lives in the shadows of its ancient glory; the great ruins of her ancient [344] Acropolis and the strong, old Citadel sur- [34C] round the present-day St. Nicholas Church which is built on the same spot where the St. Nicholas Cathedral stood, which was Scan- [778] derbeg's burial place in 1468. Sometime after Scanderbeg had been laid to rest here, the Turks, entering Alessio, made his tomb a place of veneration.

It was to this town that the chieftains of central Albania invited Scanderbeg to come when they offered him their allegiance. This great warrior had many faithful followers among the families of Alessio, and upon one of his visits, twenty-five years after he first went to Alessio to become their ruler, Scanderbeg died here.

Alessio (Lesh in the Albanian language)

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

not been unfrequent even in the present century, and the prevailing tendency on the part of the highlanders to become Moslems, and of the Orthodox Christian agriculturists to emigrate to Greece and elsewhere, makes it probable that in course of time the country may become entirely Moslem.

Like the Kūrds, however, the Moslem Albanians have among the Turks the reputation of being but indifferent followers of the Prophet, and the same opinion is entertained by their Greek neighbours of the Albanians who call themselves members of the Orthodox Church. Christian men marry Moslem women, and *vice versâ*; the sons are brought up in the faith of Mohammed, and the daughters in that of Christ; Moslems revere the Virgin Mary and the Christian saints, and make pilgrimages to their shrines; Christians reciprocally resort to the tombs of Moslem saints for the cure of ailments or in fulfilment of vows; while Christians and Moslems alike mingle with their culture-beliefs, ancient rites and superstitious usages, which both creeds have proved powerless to eradicate. The Miridites and some tribes of Ghegs on the coast adopted the Roman Catholic creed about the end of the last century, and follow the Latin rite with some Oriental differences, as, for instance, the administration of the Eucharist in both kinds to the laity.

The celebration of the Festival of Our Lady of Skodra (or Scutari), which is held on the anniversary of the departure of her image from the Latin church in that town, and in which Christians and Moslems participate, is a striking example of the half-hearted belief of the Skipetars. The story goes that, many years

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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789 484 leave of him, he returns the earrings. It is considered a bad omen for the journey if the traveller should for any reason turn or look back. If he have left anything behind, he sends another to fetch it; and should a friend or stranger call to him from behind, he will not turn back to meet him, but remain standing where he is until the other comes up, a practice which foreigners, not understanding the reason for it, have put down to discourtesy. If on the road the traveller [771] meets a fox, or a flock of sheep, he considers it a good augury; a flock of goats, however, or a hare crossing the road, is held to signify ill luck.

778 775 484 Travellers in Upper Albania may frequently see stones placed in the forks or hollows of roadside trees. According to M. Hecquard,[1] this practice originates in the belief that the stones serve as resting-places for the feet of those unhappy beings for whom the rites of sepulture have not been properly performed, and who, while wandering in mid-air, can alight upon them as on the solid earth. To place a stone on a tree is also said in some mysterious way to diminish the fatigue of the pedestrian, and help him on his journey.

787 Omens and auguries, too, both good and evil, are drawn from all the trifling occurrences of every-day life, as well as from the observation of the phenomena of Nature, besides being sought for in the bones and entrails of slaughtered sheep and in the flight of birds. Among the omens read in the actions of the domestic animals are the following. When introducing a newly purchased cow into the farmyard, some object, made of iron or silver, is placed across the gateway

[1] *La Haute Albanie.*

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

694 time limit. The request was always granted. But a second could not be made by the same compurgator. If the final day slipped by unnoticed, as sometimes happened when it was distant, an extension was generally arranged by mutual agreement.

In Catholic areas the incidence of Lent might delay matters, as Catholics did not take oaths during holy seasons.

In most districts it was the elders who said where the oath was to be taken, but in Kurbin and Lumë it was the accuser. A spiteful accuser of north Lumë, for instance, could send a suspect, with all his compurgators, to take the oath in south Dibër, a four days' journey there and back, with all expenses falling on the suspect. It was probably to prevent such displays of malice that the choice of place generally rested with the elders.

695 778 There was often a close connexion between the place at which, and the sacred object on which, the oath had to be taken. The chief sacred objects on which Catholics were called to swear were the Gospel, the crucifix and the local church or its altar. Among Moslems, there were the Koran, the local mosque and a saint's grave. The Gospel in the one case and the Koran in the other was usually chosen. Dibër, a purely Sunni Moslem district, and somewhat fanatical, claimed to take the oath only on the Koran.

North Albanians went to church to swear on the Gospel or crucifix, but to their scandal the Catholics of Kurbin, Mirditë and Lurë had these sacred emblems carried to the suspect's house. Indeed, in Kurbin and Lurë an oath was never taken on the Gospel except outside the precincts of the church; the same was presumably true in Mirditë. No reason for the taboo is known; perhaps the combined sanctity of Gospel and church was thought to involve too much risk. When swearing on an altar, the oath-takers had naturally to enter the church, but when swearing on the church itself they remained outside, touching only a stone in the south door, possibly the threshold, perhaps a door-jamb. Sometimes they repeated the prescribed oath in the neighbourhood of the church. Oaths were most commonly taken on the church in cases of petty theft; graver cases demanded an oath on the Gospel or crucifix.

Moslem procedure was in general so similar to Catholic that it seems to have been inherited from the days when all the area under study was Catholic. To swear on a mosque, as the Moslems of Çermenikë sometimes did, it was enough to touch its door-jamb or threshold, precisely in the Catholic manner. To swear on the Koran,

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

some preferred to go to the mosque, as the Catholics in the north went to church. But more often the Moslems, like the Catholics of Kurbin, went to the suspect's house. Since no possible sanctity could attach to a private house, it seems to have been the sacred book rather than the building which gave such oaths their value. In Zdrâjshë and Zerqan, indeed, it was openly said that provided an oath was taken on the Koran, the place where it was taken did not matter. It is probable that the same view was held in Krasniqë in the north-east, where oaths were taken in either the mosque or one of the shady spots called *ulicë*. It seems possible that these groves might be sacred because growing on the sites of former churches, but the local Moslems said that there had never been churches there and that no sanctity attached to the spots.[1] When taking oath by a sacred grave, Moslems usually entered the mausoleum; for such oaths there was no Catholic parallel.

In Zerqan a suspect must never be asked to take an oath in or near his own house, for if he swore falsely the house might collapse or otherwise come to grief. This fear was not acknowledged in the many other areas where such oaths were common, but it may have been implicit. If a suspect staked his own house by taking the oath in it, he would naturally try harder than ever to avoid perjury.

In mixed districts the suspect and the accuser might be of different faiths. In that event when the decision lay with the elders, the suspect's religion decided whether it was in the church or mosque, on the Gospel or the Koran, that the oath should be taken. When the decision lay with the accuser his wishes prevailed. In such districts the jury too was often mixed. They had all to take the same oath as the suspect. So Catholics had to make oath in a mosque and on the Koran if the suspect was a Moslem; and in the opposite case Moslems had to make it in a church and on the Gospel. In Vinjollë, lying some six miles north of Krujë, after it became Moslem an oath could still be taken on the Gospel as well as on the Koran. In Lurë, when it was abandoning Catholicism, a man could swear, at least in conversation, by the mosque or church, according to which came into his head first, irrespective of his own or his hearer's religion.

Moslems but not Catholics might take oath at a sacred grave. This might stand in a single mausoleum or form part of a monastery. The most important of these graves were Sulejman Pasha's at

[1] But doubtless a pagan survival of the sacred grove (*lucus*). (Ed.)

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695 Tirana, Sheikh Hasan's at Nangë in Lumë, Sheikh Ibrahim's at
778 Surroj across the river Drin from Nangë, Sheikh Fejza's at Bulqizë, Balim Sulltan's at Martanesh, and those of two abbots at Krujë. Sulejman Pasha and Sheikh Ibrahim lie in an isolated mausoleum, [795] Balim Sulltan in a cave, and the others in monasteries. These saints belonged to different sects; Sulejman Pasha, the soldier who founded Tirana in the seventeenth century, was a Sunni; Sheikh Hasan, founder of the monastery at Nangë, and his brother, Sheikh Ibrahim of Surroj, were Khalvetis; Balim Sulltan of Martanesh and the two abbots of Krujë were Bektashis; and Sheikh Fejza, founder of the monastery at Bulqizë, a dissident Bektashi. Sometimes it did not matter to what sect the buried saint belonged. Sheikh Hasan of Nangë was so renowned that the local population, even if not Khalvetis, took their oaths on his grave and never in the mosque, and Catholic as well as Moslem oath-takers came in serious cases to his grave from Shkodër, four days away. Sulejman Pasha's grave drew oath-takers from as far away as Martanesh; these had long since forgotten his history, and, though ardent Bektashis, did not care that he was a Sunni. Sunni Albanians are not so liberal however; taught to abhor the Bektashis as unorthodox Moslems, they left the graves of Balim Sulltan of Martanesh and the two abbots of Krujë to Bektashi oath-takers. Sheikh Fejza, abhorred by Sunnis as almost a Bektashi and by Bektashis as a backslider from their faith, commanded allegiance only among his own followers in Bulqizë. Oaths used to be taken in three mausolea in the Bektashi monastery at Krujë, but by 1930 the abbot refused to open one for such a purpose. Once, as an oath was being taken in this mausoleum, both disputants fell dead; there had been roguery on both sides as the buried saint was quick to detect. Ever afterwards the abbots restricted oath-takers to the two mausolea in which the saints seemed slower to wrath.

695 Among invocations of the Deity used in oaths, the following are
782 recorded: 'By the Lord' (Perlat and Shkrel); 'By this Lord Who gave me life' (Perlat); 'By this Lord Who is in Heaven' (Shalë); 'By Our Lady' (Shkrel); and 'By the Blood of Christ' (Shalë). In all these the influence of the Church is evident, but there are hints in the Albanian originals that some are older than the Church.

The Deity was invoked by Moslems as follows: 'By that Lord' (Godolesh); 'By God' (Dibër); 'By God, with God, from God'[1]

[1] *Vallahi, billahi, tallahi.*

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695 even became saints at their death, but an oath 'by the priest' or
698 'by that hoxha' was never taken; it would have been regarded as
793 sacrilege.

695 A most interesting oath was taken by both the Orthodox and the
792 Moslems of Berat town and district. Its commonest forms were
[776] 'By Him of Tomorr' and 'By the Holy One of Tomorr'. The deity that dwelt in pagan days on the summit of Tomorr, the lofty, beautiful mountain that dominates the town of Berat, is still a living force in the district. He was, indeed, so dreaded that even in conversation he could not be named, but only darkly alluded to. 'By that mountain top' is no less solemn an oath than the more definite pair already given. No man had been known to swear any of them falsely.

[821] By what was perhaps a survival of early nature worship, oath-takers sometimes invoked natural objects as in the oaths, 'By this bright light which is dawning', 'By this evening which is coming', 'By this night we have to-night'. These were all given by Catholics in Perlat. The first two were used for oaths taken in the morning and the third for those taken in the evening. Moslems in Godolesh and Labinot sometimes swore 'By this sun' and 'By this earth'. The latter was a very solemn oath, earth being weighty for two reasons: man was made of it and it lies heavy on a dead man who committed sins such as perjury during his lifetime. Apparently oaths were not taken 'by this fire' or 'by this moon'; perhaps both fire and moon lack the inevitability and stability that fitted dawn and darkness, the sun and the earth, for worship by primitive Albanians.

695 Among oaths by sacred buildings were such as 'By this church'
782 among Catholics and 'By this mosque' among Moslems. They were
778 chiefly employed conversationally, and meant little more than our own expression 'on my honour'. Indeed, a man of Lurë used them indifferently, irrespective of whether he or his hearer were Catholic or Moslem. But when a Moslem of Martanesh swore 'by this holy place' as he stood in Balim Sulltan's mausoleum, his oath was very solemn. So, too, were the oaths in Bulqizë 'by that shrine', the domed tomb of Sheikh Fejza; in Tirana by the grave of Sulejman Pasha, the seventeenth-century founder of the town; in Krujë by the tombs of two Bektashi abbots; in Nangë, Lumë, by the tomb of the Khalveti saint, Sheikh Hasan; and in Surroj, by the grave of Sheikh Hasan's brother, Sheikh Ibrahim. In the last case the formula was rather unusual; standing in the mausoleum (*teqe*) the

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oath-taker began by saying 'May Sheikh Ibrahim cut short my life'. In the other cases he used some vague formula such as 'By this holy place' or 'By this shrine'.

Oaths by smaller sacred objects were all very similar. The formula used in swearing on an altar was in Shalë 'By this altar'; on a church door in the Malësi e Madhe and Kurbin, 'By these things of the Lord'; on a crucifix or gospel in Mirditë, 'By this holy thing of God'; in Kurbin 'By this thing of God'. The more fanatical of the Moslems preferred to swear on the Koran under a Turkish, or rather Arabic, name. Thus 'By this holy book' was liked in Lumë, and 'By this sacred book' everywhere. Others, as in Vinjollë and Zerqan, swore 'By this thing of God', or if in Godolesh, 'By the holy thing of this our God'. The last oath is very close to the oath of Catholic Mirditë on the Gospel, and there is little doubt that this Moslem oath was once Catholic or Orthodox. Indeed, it may have been pagan. The vagueness of their phraseology made the transference from one religion to another easy. A similar vagueness characterizes most of the oaths in this paragraph. Its origin lay in the simple Albanian's idea of respect for a sacred object; he thought that naming a person or thing detracted from the majesty of that person or thing. Besides preserving the efficacy of ancient oaths through later changes of religion, this vagueness also reduced any repugnance which a Catholic or Moslem in a mixed jury might feel at being asked to swear on the holy book of the other's religion. It has even led Catholics of Lurë, when Islam was fast displacing Catholicism, to anticipate the future conversion by swearing the essentially Moslem oath 'By this *hajmali* (sacred book)' on the Christian Gospel.

A curious and most solemn oath among Catholics was 'by the stone'. This was not any ordinary stone that the oath-taker might pick up regardless of his religion, but was a special one found only among Catholics. Triangular in shape, it had a hole in each of its three corners for attaching the balance in which persons minded to offer votive candles to church weighed the wax of which each was to be made. It derived such sanctity from this association with the church that an oath on it was as serious as one on the Gospel or crucifix. Such an oath was in fact reserved for occasions of special gravity, as when a man suspected of a heinous crime was put to the ordeal, or a whole tribe swore to refrain from acts disturbing the public peace, or a community took oath to stick together through

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thick and thin. No memory of oath or stone survives in areas such as Çermenikë and Lumë, which abandoned Catholicism some centuries ago.

A number of very solemn oaths were taken on objects that had no obvious association with religion, and these seem to date from the oldest days of Albanian existence. Thus an oath in very common use all over the country was 'By bread'. Among the Catholics where the priests combated everything that they thought was pagan, this oath was more often heard in conversation than in ordeals, but among the Orthodox and Moslems it held a higher place. The most solemn oath of the Orthodox of Shpat was 'By that Christ in Whom we believe and by that bread we eat'. The Moslems generally used a loaf, treating it like a Koran.

Sometimes at least in Martanesh an uncooked maize-cob served instead of a loaf. Both in Martanesh and in Lumë salt was often added; the formula then was in Lumë 'By the bounties of the Lord'.

One advantage of swearing on bread was that the oath could be taken, and peace made as soon as trouble arose. If two men who had met in a house quarrelled, one accusing the other of letting his animals stray into his maize-field or of cutting firewood in his forest or the like, the accused could immediately clear himself, provided two or three other men were present as witnesses; no set jury was necessary. All he had to do was to lay his right hand on bread and say, 'May the bread kill me'. This oath was known in places as far apart as Labinot and Lumë. It has already been said that though a woman could not make oath on the Koran, she might, in Zerqan if accused of petty pilfering, make one on bread. Men in Godolesh, which was an Orthodox village till 1910, sometimes swore 'by this bread' but did not consider it one of their most serious oaths.

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The reason for choosing bread for such a serious occasion as an ordeal is not certain. The Orthodox oath from Shpat speaks of eating it so that the idea of its being the staff of life seems present. Its conjunction with salt in Lumë and Martanesh supports this idea. On the other hand, the influence of Holy Communion also seems at work. The Orthodox of Albania as of Greece speak of it as the Body of Christ, and on that account consider it sinful to cut rather than break it before beginning to eat. Moslems regard even crumbs of it as too sacred to tread on. Most probably the idea that

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

it is the staff of life is the oldest, and religious conceptions come later. As essential to life, it was suited to oath-taking; as shown by the oath 'May the bread kill me', it had power to punish perjury with death.

Two more formulae remain to be mentioned. The first was 'By my head', and the second 'By the head of my son'. The former was thought justifiable; one might do as one pleased with one's own head. But a man who swore on his son's head was strongly disapproved of; only a low fellow, it w thought, would risk his child's life by such an oath. Nothing less was involved, as appears in the following full formula for a land dispute. 'By the head of the son that I have, this land is mine. If it is not mine, may I weep for the son that I have.'[1]

When the time came to take the oath, both Catholics and Moslems behaved as if about to perform an act of worship. Catholics removed their caps and made the oath bareheaded; they also crossed themselves as they began. Sunni Moslems performed the ceremonial ablutions incumbent on them before they pray. By their preliminaries the Catholics sought to indicate respect for the Deity; by theirs the Sunnis sought also to make their oath binding —without them, so they believed, it would be null and void. The Moslems of Martanesh, being Bektashis, did not perform the ceremonial ablutions, but suspect and compurgator when taking the oath in a house had to stand facing Mecca, with the witnesses behind them. As each man's turn came, he advanced towards the Koran or loaf of bread, knelt, and laying hand on the book or bread repeated the prescribed words. This reverence for the sacred emblem was shown by both religions, sometimes with quaint little ceremonies. Thus, when the Catholics of Lurë swore in the open on the Gospel, as was their common practice, they picked up some grass or other greenery and held it over the book while they recited the oath; the purpose of the grass is not clear.[2] After the conversion of Vinjollë to Islam from Catholicism oaths were sworn indifferently, as has already been said, on the Gospel or Koran. When at a house, the sacred book was laid on fresh grass near the house or on a clean place in the farmyard. Each oath-taker kissed it three times, before venturing to put his hand on it and repeat the oath.

[1] The oath on a son's head is common to the Moslem world and if perjured involves the son as well as his father in eternal damnation.

[2] Possibly it involved the false swearer in withering like the plucked grass.

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sent the cousins word to that effect and said he was sending a deputy. 693
When the latter arrived, he found the named cousin ready to take 696
the oath but no boundary stones in place. He refused to witness the oath because Cen's condition had not been observed. The matter was referred back to Cen, who said that since the cousin put to the oath had been unable to take it as enjoined, the other must have the land. If they did not wish to accept this judgement, let them bring him four napoleons each as his fee for the incomplete oath, and let them find another elder and he would pay his expenses; he was no guarantor to make them accept his judgement. The cousins prepared to accept his decision, but when the winner began to plough the land, the loser shot one of his men dead and wounded another; the feud continued for many years.

The oath derived its efficiency as a legal instrument from super- 782
stitious fear of punishment for perjury. God, as the Almighty, was [695]
naturally the chief agent of this punishment. 'Don't let God catch a perjurer', said the aphorism. In invocations the connexion between oath and Deity was simple. The oath-taker called God or one of His saints to witness to the truth of what he was about to swear, and did so in the full knowledge that if he angered Him by perjury, he must expect a manifestation of Divine wrath. There was a very definite belief that God was watching. In oaths sworn on a sacred object or building, such as 'By this good thing of the Lord', there was an indirect invocation of the Deity, but also while the oath-taker swore, he had to keep his hand on the sacred object—Gospel, crucifix, altar, church door, Koran, saint's grave—just as a witness in an English law court must take the oath with his hand [178]
on the Bible. This act established physical contact between the oath-taker and the Deity or saint with which the sacred object or building was associated. To a simple tribesman this was a very solemn thought. On this account these contact oaths were preferred above all others. Probably the contact also made the tribesman think punishment more certain. All over the Near East the principle of direct contact with holy things plays an important role. This is most familiar in cases of sickness, as when people knot rags to sacred graves or trees; the holy influences with which they have thus linked their persons penetrate their whole being and cure their maladies. Many instances will be found in the author's book *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*. But suppliants for such favours must placate the holy influences with prayers or

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other offerings. If they irritated them, as an oath-taker would do by perjuring himself, they could only expect punishment.

A most interesting example of the working of physical contact which is certainly of pagan origin was found in the Moslem district of Sulovë, south-west of Elbasan. There the most hardened oath-taker dare not forswear himself in a serious case, for he must then take the oath with a coin in his mouth, and perjury would bring him certain death. The coin was clearly Charon's obol, as was the coin slipped on to the chest of Albanian dead in many widely separated areas.

In the exclusively Catholic oath 'by the stone' the solemnity of the oath came from the contact with a holy thing, and punishment for perjury was inflicted in any form that the sacred object chose. When, however, elders swore their equally solemn oath with a stone, log of wood or other weight on their shoulder, or when a man, stone on shoulder, claimed repayment of a dead man's debt, no principle of contact was involved. There was rather a quite crude belief that a perjuring elder would be punished by having to carry the weight for ever and ever in the next world.

God punished the perjurer both in this world and in the next. When the man died, his soul was lost, for being 'heavy-laden before the Lord' it had nowhere to go. If he was an elder who had taken an oath with a stone on his shoulder, he was doomed to carry the stone through all eternity. The first of these terrors was evidently inspired by the Church. The second is an older fear. The elder, when taking the oath, often expressed his willingness to carry the stone in the next world if he perjured himself, but an accused man left his future condition to be inferred, except for the cryptic phrase 'If I did it, may He reward me', which he sometimes inserted in his oath. When he was thinking only of himself he meant, according to the Catholics of Kurbin, 'If I lie may God kill me. If I tell the truth, may He forgive me my sins.' When he contrasted himself with his accuser he meant, 'If I did it may I suffer for it. If I didn't, and you've made me run the risk of taking this oath without due cause, may *you* suffer for it.' This sentence seems to have died out among the Moslems.

Death was the commonest, and most dreaded, form of punishment in this world. In the most solemn oaths it was specified—a son's in the oath by the child's head, the oath-taker's own in the oaths by his own head, with Charon's coin in his mouth, and in

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl
[Solemn Pledge for Flock + Shepherd in Nikaj + Shalë, St. Prendo's Day, 1894]

If any man meddles with one by force he has meddled with a person under a pledge of safety. [681]

If any man dishonours a woman or ravishes her he has meddled with a person under a pledge of safety.

The Gjklika family is not under a pledge of safety.

Ndue Lika's family is under a pledge of safety for its flock and shepherd.

9. Whoever touches sheep belonging to Nikaj or Shalë must pay 500 grosh or give a Martini rifle, the value of which is 500 grosh. He must also return two animals for every one stolen and pay 500 grosh to the owner of the stolen animals.

10. A detective is to receive 100 grosh for tracking down a sheep and twenty for tracking down a cow or an ox.

11. If a Nikaj or a Shalë man goes to a house to kill someone, he has leave to do whatever the fingers of his hand or the muzzle of his rifle can do. But chisels, wood and any form of iron are not to be used.

Whoever breaks this law, unless he is killed and buried, must pay 20 purses and until he pays them he must look out for his life. If he is killed, the matter must be left at a head for a head.

12. Whoever plays false to this pledge treating it with contempt or ignoring it must give an oath with 24 persons who must say they know nothing, as arranged by the other tribes. If he cannot give such an oath he must pay 20 purses like a man who kills another. [695]

13. A borrower who owes money to someone must go to the head of his ward. If he does not give this head satisfaction, he must go to the Bajraktar. If he does not give the Bajraktar satisfaction he is without protection. He may be robbed and killed until he enters the way of the Bajraktar.

14. The roads from Shalë and Nikaj to Shosh and Mertur are guaranteed by Shalë and Nikaj and if they are cut, 20 purses must be paid. [491]

15. The chapels (*koniqet*) of Nikaj and Shalë in which no candle is lit to St John, St Nicolas and St Bastian (Sebastian), are under a pledge of safety. [778]

16. Complaints in Shkodër and Gjakovë are annulled. [694]

VIII. Pledge for Flocks and Shepherds in Nikaj and Curraj, St John's Day, 1895.

(From Father Gjeçov, *Kanùn*, p. 120.)

1. Any man who kills a shepherd will have his house burned down and his land kept untilled for three years.

2. His neighbours will not have their houses burned down but must pay five purses, 1000 grosh of it for the master of the feud and three purses for the guarantors.

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania EG1

To the Land of the Eagle

saint can further their political aims, and, to me, at all events, the matter still remains a mystery.

In addition to the belief in the powers of St. John of Scutari—a belief which has a religious background—the local people hold other beliefs, some of which date back to very remote times. The graves of the babas are accounted holy, and are usually covered with cloths put there by pious persons who need assistance. And at a certain spot in the masonry of the ancient city wall there is a window or aperture at which it is customary for women who are unable to nurse their babies to place offerings of bread. When the wall was originally built, many centuries ago, a woman was sacrificed by being enclosed alive in the masonry at this particular spot. The sacrifice, quite a usual one in those days when any constructional work of importance was begun, was intended to propitiate evil spirits who might interfere with the progress of the work. On this occasion an opening was left, so the story goes, through which the unhappy woman might suckle her baby, and it is on this account that the place is supposed to possess the power of stimulating the flow of natural milk in those who make offerings there.

The tourist, should he penetrate so far, will find much to interest him in Elbasan, especially on market day, when it is packed with country folk in an astonishing variety of costumes. The surroundings are delightful. There are several parks and open spaces of which the most remarkable is a small square to the south of the town surrounded by

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
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Serbs EF6

A 783 627 pre-Slavonic times. One other trace maybe of holy trees and stones I saw in 1904 when riding through Albania, and never again.

My horse-boy picked up stones and thrust them in the forks of trees when we passed through a wood. To the horror of my companion, A [775 769] who was a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society from South Albania, the boy declared he was doing so for the spirits of the dead to have something to tread on as they passed. Unfortunately the colporteur blamed him, and he would say no more about it. Hahn, in his Albanian studies, mentions this custom.

A ●778 On this journey we passed two small woods where, I was told, no trees were ever cut because "a long while ago a church stood there." No one knew when. The "church" had probably been imagined, to account for the sanctity of the wood.

S 627 538 782 In Serbian tales and ballads the oaths are usually sworn by "God and St. John." Does St. John the Baptist represent a former oath on a holy spring? In Montenegro, SS. Petar Cetinski and Vasili of Ostrog were daily asked to bear witness to many dubious statements. No Montenegrin peasant can make a statement, whether true or false, without calling on God and one or other of his saints; and, alas! the old idea of the sanctity of an oath had evaporated and the statement was too often a lie.

Whereas I found the word of the Albanian tribesman reliable; but civilization may weaken his word, too.

M 782 Old King Nikola of Montenegro used to call Heaven to witness many remarkable statements. Once, when the Diplomatic Circle had been summoned to hear an unusually remarkable one, it is said that an astonished silence ensued, till one Minister Plenipotentiary, recovering his presence of mind, politely said: "Your Royal Highness is famed through Europe as . . . a poet."

. 2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
Montenegrins EF5
Turkey MB1
Serbs EF6

the body was laid in it, in order to prevent any devil lurking there to seize the dead.

I remember waiting by the tiny grave dug for a child at Thethi Shala in the graveyard. Someone tripped over the long protruding handle of the shovel and dislodged it. The old gravedigger dashed forward and replaced it at once, and drew it out only as the little corpse was lowered. The Franciscan, an Albanian, who stood by the graveside, acquiesced. "It is the custom," he said when questioned. Possibly, like the rest of us, he could not keep demons at bay unaided.

Iron keeps off all spirits, good and bad, it appears; for no knife must touch the fowl's breast-bone or sheep's blade-bone in which the Albanian and Montenegrin soothsayers read the future. No one can tell you why; but everyone knows it would be the height of folly to try to read a bone that has been cleaned with a knife—it would not tell the truth.

Colonel Aubrey Herbert, that friend of the Turks and Albanians, whose untimely death has left an unfillable gap, gave me a curious instance of the belief in the magic of iron. During the Balkan war of 1913 the Turkish general, Djavid Pasha, retreated with what was left of his army into South Albania, where "he occupied the house of a friend of mine. The tide of war was running fiercely against the Turks and the general wanted to consult the spirits. The family carpenter was ordered to make a three-legged table without any nails in it—'for the spirits hate metal,' said Djavid. The young Turks invoked the spirit of Nazim Pasha, who had been shot by Enver and his friends. . . . When no answer came, the absent ghost of Nazim was cursed for refusing to give information."

Even the absence of iron could not induce the spirit of the murdered man to advise his murderers.

6. Hair. Some Beliefs and Customs connected with it

In many lands much mystery surrounds hair, that strange substance that grows continually from youth to age; which is part of the person, but can be cut off without pain and is, therefore, the most convenient substitute or symbol for the whole person.

By means of hair spells can be wrought even in an electric-lighted European capital. Draga Mashin, the mistress of the luckless young King Alexander Obrenovitch, forced him to marry her and make her queen by clipping some of her hair in little bits and mixing it with appropriate spells in his food. Having thus eaten a portion of her, he was hopelessly in her power. At least, so we were assured by one of

10: Lodge S-5 (1919, 1939)1941
EF6 Serbs EF6
Albania E61

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538 and their own families, because they have become so much
769 identified with the whole nation, its history, sorrows, and glories.

II

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778 So it is also with many of the Orthodox saints, especially
755 those who were benefactors of the country, such as St Sava
[776] and St Ana, to mention but two of many. Some of them have special ceremonies to be performed on their feast-days, others special places or tombs set apart for them. A great wealth of tradition and superstition surrounds them. At the monastery of Visoki Dečani legend exalts the tomb of King Stefan (Uroš III) Dečanski, or, as he is better known to the people, *Sveti Kralj Dečanski*, the holy king of Dečani, who founded the monastery and who is buried in the church. He was given a new tomb by King Alexander Obrenović in the nineteenth century, in which is enclosed one of his hands—all that now remains of him. This tomb, covered with an embroidered cloth, is placed to the north of the middle door of the ikonostasis, and, like those of so many important Serbian saints, has a sort of little passage underneath at the head end, which slants through to an aperture in the side. To this tomb come all those with ailments, who, if they wish to be cured, must creep under
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● 778 and through it three times. Peasants from the neighbouring
755 villages believe that this rite will certainly cure them; and large numbers of Moslem Albanians as well as Orthodox Serbians visit the tomb with the same hope.

Once when I was there (May 1932) a Mohammedan Albanian peasant brought his wife and two kinswomen. The women, who had stiff legs, crept under the tomb the prescribed three times, while some other Albanians went to the sacristan monk, who read prayers and anointed their sores and injuries with holy oil, which he took from one of the little lamps or *kandila* burning before the tomb. No fee is charged; and this monk told me that every day sick peasants, mostly Albanians, of whom there are large numbers in the surrounding country, come for healing, and that many of them are cured.

10: Lodge S-5 (1919, 1939)1941
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Again, to the tomb of King Uroš in the ruined church at Sopoćani come the peasants from that neighbourhood, to kiss it and light candles on it, or to lay on it gifts of scarves, stockings, handkerchiefs, and sometimes money; all of which are afterwards sold for the benefit of the church. The women also sit underneath it or lie against it to get cured. Sopoćani was one of the monasteries founded by Stefan Nemanja; and is situated up in the mountains fourteen kilometres from Novi Pazar. It was destroyed by the Turks after the Battle of Kosovo, but the ruins were re-roofed a few years ago. The peasants come here either for the *sabor* or assembly of peasants on the third day of the Feast of St Peter (July 1/14), or for the *slava* on the following day—the Feast of the Visitation. From all the neighbouring villages they come bringing their food, often roasting lambs whole on the adjacent mountain-sides, and afterwards dancing the *kolo* in the churchyard till late in the evening. But first of all it is the custom for everyone to go to church.

In the church of Priština, also, the women sit or lie underneath the table on which stands the holy ikon of *Sveti Bogorodica*, or the Holy Mother of God. At the Eastertide services I have seen old women sitting underneath it for long periods; and once one of them brought a Mohammedan Albanian boy to sit there too, in order to cure his weak legs. Here also the peasants rub their eyes and those of their children with the red fringe of the tablecloth of the ikon, in the hope of healing. This custom is found all over the country, wherever there are fringes or hangings on important tombs or ikons of special sanctity or renown.

Another curious belief is that sore eyes are cured by making decoctions of saints' eyes: so that in many churches the eyes of all the saints in the frescoes within arm's reach, especially those of figures of great authority or holiness, have been picked out. For instance in the frescoes of the Nemanja family at Dećani, few, if any, have a vestige of eye left. The women are continually picking them out, to take the bits of plaster home and boil them up for a lotion